The Gambler and the King of Hell

(Bakuchi Juo)

Translation copyright 2014 by Don Kenny Kyogen-in-english.com

Gambler

Emma, King of Hell

Demons

(EMMA comes on, followed by his demon bodyguards.)

EMMA & DEMONS (Singing.)

Emma the King of Hell

Comes out to the crossing of the six roads.

EMMA 　(Speaking.) I am Emma, the great king of Hell. These days humans in the mundane world have become so very clever with the laws of their eight or nine different religions that they all troupe off to paradise, both those who do Zen meditation and those who adhere to the Pure Land sect, throwing hell into a desperate state of famine. As a result, I, the Great King Emma, accompanied by the most hellish of my demon army, have made up my mind to go up to the Crossing of the Six Roads. Any and all sinners who come by, we will capture and eat on the spot.

(Singing.)

From the home I love, From my beloved home in hell, I venture forth, From my beloved home in hell, I venture forth, Allowing my feet to lead me where’er they will,

(Singing.) Emma, the king of hell,

The great king of hell, Emma Now ascends into the mundane world To beg for alms.

(Singing.)

Allowing my feet to lead me where’er they will, I now arrived at the Crossing of the Six Roads

(Speaking.) Traveling with urgency, I now find myself at the Crossing of the Six Roads. All of you, make sure you remain alert and torment any sinner who may come along.

DEMONS With all our hearts.

GAMBLER

(Singing.)

I decived people’s eyes all my life,

and am now a dead sinner.

(Speaking.) I am an expert gambler, known throughout the mundane world, but I was unable to manipulate the length of my life, so, blown about by the winds of fate, I am on my way to the netherworld.

(Singing.)

Leaving the familiar mundane world behind,

Leaving behind all regrets,

Leaving behind all regrets,

Following wherever my feet might lead me,

I have now arrived at the crossing of the six roads.

(Speaking.) How many roads there are. Which road should I follow. I will simply continue on my way.

DEMON 1 Suddenly I smell a human.

DEMON 2 Well, and I distinctly smell a human too.

DEMON 1 So I see it is a sinner. Let’s quickly set to tormenting him.

DEMON 2 That is a fine idea.

(The two demons struggle to torment the Gambler, but he parries their blows and escapes unharmed.)

GAMBLER You must not treat me so very roughly. Stop and forgive me.

DEMON 1 So just who are you?

GAMBLER I am a gambler who is famed throughout the mundane world.

DEMON 1 That means that you are a serious sinner. Go quickly and bow down before Emma.

DEMON 2 That you must do.

DEMON 1 Hear us, you sinner. . .

DEMON 2 Make haste, utmost haste.

(The Demons torment the Gambler and succeed in pinning him down and dragging him before Emma.)

EMMA Hey, hey, I say, who is this sinner?

DEMON 1 He is a gambler who is famed throughout the mundane world.

EMMA Let me see, let me see. Indeed his formed is reflected in my lapis lazuli mirror. Here, here, you are a most serious sinner among sinners. So now I will read to you the record of the extent of your sins. Listen well. To begin with, you deceived and cheated people, taking from them all their gold and silver and rice and coins, on top of which, you also took away their family treasures, and frequently went so far as to strip off even the clothes from their very backs. Those are most serious sins, so what makes you think that you can escape unscathed?

GAMBLER Oh, but I was not the only one who took things from others, for depending on the result of the competition, there were times when I won and times when my opponent won, so we competed on an equal basis. In other words, since we merely played a game of the mundane world, there was not the least element of sin involved.

EMMA So you say that you were not the only one who was involved in gambling. So does that mean that there are also other gamblers?

GAMBLER That there are indeed. In the mundane world, not only at the New Year’s season and while waiting for the moon to rise or the sun to rise, all people old and young, of high rank or low, gather to enjoy gambling together.

EMMA So it is not as serious sin as I had heard it was. And is gambling so very entertaining?

GAMBLER Haven’t you yourself ever gambled?

EMMA No, I have never before either seen it or heard of it.

GAMBLER Gambling is not all that interesting.

EMMA Won’t you show me a little about gambling?

GAMBLER If I have an opponent, I can show you some gambling.

EMMA What’s that, you say you cannot gamble alone?

GAMBLER Gambling alone does not constitute a gambling match.

EMMA Here, here, Demons, do you know how to gamble?

DEMONS Not one of us knows anything about gambling.

EMMA What a pity, because I also know nothing about gambling.

GAMBLER It is not all that difficult, so if I teach you how, you will be able to gamble right away.

EMMA Please do teach me.

GAMBLER Then watch carefully what I do.

EMMA What is that?

GAMBLER It is a thing called a dice. It is marked with the numbers one through six. And when I throw it, if you say one or six or any other number in beween, when your number comes up on top, you are the winner.

EMMA I generally get the gist of what you say. So what will the winner win?

GAMBLER If I win, you will give me any reward that I desire. And if you are the winner, I will give you any reward that you desire.

EMMA Here, here, I need no reward, for if I win, I will simply capture and eat you.

GAMBLER That is how it is done. So under those conditions, I will be your opponent.

EMMA Hey, you demons, I am going to gamble, so come here and watch.

DEMONS With all our hearts.

GAMBLER So what number do you chose?

EMMA I choose number one.

GAMBLER So show me what you will give me as a reward.

EMMA First throw the dice, and afterwards, I will reward you with whatever you want.

GAMBLER So now I will throw the dice. And I win. Do you want to try once more?

EMMA Of course, I will try once more.

GAMBLER And what will be the reward?

EMMA How bothersome to gamble so frequently. I will give you my jeweled crown.

GAMBLER And what number do you choose?

EMMA I choose one once more.

GAMBLER This time the number five came up, so I win.

(Emma bets on various parts of his accouterments and continues to call number one.)

DEMON 1 Wait just a moment. I bet on this iron pole. So throw the dice again.

GAMBLER What number do you choose.

DEMON 1 I choose three.

EMMA Here, here, wait a minute. I have bet on number one up to this time, but it doesn’t come up. Since it is about time for it to come up, bet on number one again.

DEMON 1 Oh, no. I choose number three this time.

EMMA Here, here, I pray to you with folded hands to choose number one.

(Emma loses again.)

EMMA Come, come, throw the dice once more. I will give you any reward that you desire afterwards.

GAMBLER I win again.

EMMA Since number one has never come up, tell me what reward you desire.

GAMBLER If that is the case, lead me to paradise.

EMMA I will lead you wherever you wish, but in this denuded state, I feel uncomfortable, so please lend me my clothing.

GAMBLER First lead me to paradise, and as soon as I arrive there, I will give you back your clothing.

EMMA Due to the recent famine in hell, I came out to the crossing of the six roads, where I met with the gambler, to whom I lost miserably, causing my unhappiness to continue.

(Singing.)

The great king of hell has lost to a gambler,

CHORUS

The great king of hell has lost to a gambler,

Losing everything from his golden signboard,

To his iron pole, and all of his clothing,

And finally having nothing else to bet on,

He is forced to lead the gambler to paradise,

To the great joy and good fortune of the gambler,

The great joy and good fortune of the gambler,

All set out to lead him to the Pure Land.